



# TEAMSTERS UNION LOCAL NO. 190

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY  
Exhibit No. 7

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## SENATE BILL 498

### Testimony of Teamsters Local 190

Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee – February 21, 2007

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, for the record my name is Don Judge and I'm submitting this testimony today on behalf of Teamsters Local 190 in support of Senate Bill 498.

Senate Bill 498 attempts to address what everyone in this room knows is a growing crisis in health care access in Montana. And, while many of us wish that something could be done at the federal level to address the lack of affordable health care access for all of the states, the realities of politics and lack of political will give little hope that anything substantive will be done very quickly at that level.

SB 498, on the other hand, suggests that Montana can, like other states have already done, take control of our own health care destiny and face the crisis head on, before it becomes insurmountable. Simply put, SB 498 proposes to establish a broad-based health care working group to design a universal health care system for Montana which is to become effective in January 2011. It proposes to have representatives of the medical community, consumers, employers and employees, the state auditor's office, DPHHS and uninsured persons work to develop a system which can work for Montana.

SB 498 provides guidelines which we fully support. They include universal access to high-quality health care, regardless of income. They would allow patients to choose their own providers and would not restrict access or reduce quality to hold down costs. It would require comprehensive benefits, including those mandated by law, mental health services, chemical dependency treatment, prescription drugs, equipment & supplies, dental care, long-term care and home services.

SB 498 envisions funding through premiums and payments based upon an individual's ability to pay. It suggests a focus on early intervention and preventative care and would insure adequate and timely payments to providers.

And of great importance to those seeking to improve affordability of health care, SB 498 envisions a single-payer system which could significantly reduce the costs associated with the current system involving a myriad of forms, paperwork, payers, bookkeepers, billing clerks, etc. necessary to make it flow.


Frankly, Teamsters Local 190 believes that it is way past time that Montana take hold of its health care destiny. At every level of the labor movement we're finding that unions and employers are working together to attempt to resolve America's health care crisis. The share of workers covered through their jobs has fallen from 81% in 2001 to 77% in 2005 and that number continues to fall.

Just last month the Los Angeles Times reported that the President of the Service Employees International Union stood with the director of the Business Roundtable to announce a campaign to overhaul health care. And the same article announced that private health insurance companies were joining with doctors' organizations and health-activist groups to announce their push for universal coverage. Karen Ignagni who heads a trade group called America's Health Insurance Plans said "The health insurance problem has been with us for decades. With all these different efforts, you are seeing a consensus emerge that the time for action is now."

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, we agree. The time is now, and despite these efforts going on at the federal level we believe that Montana should take the reigns and start the work of overhauling our health care system for the tens of thousands of uninsured Montanans, the tens of thousands more who are underinsured and the tens of thousands of others whose future health care access is threatened by our failure to act.

We strongly encourage your committee to give Senate Bill 498 a "do pass" recommendation. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,



Don Judge, Representative  
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